



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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FOOD STAMP PARTICIPATION HOLDING STEADY IN TENNESSEE *MORE THAN HALF A MILLION TENNESSEANS RECEIVE ASSISTANCE EACH MONTH*

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — More than 350,000 Tennessee families received needed help putting food on the table in May through the Food Stamp program. The same number of families received that support in April. While the number of households seeking assistance appears to be leveling off, there is still a marked increase over last year's figures. Food Stamp assistance rose nearly nine percent from May 2003 to May 2004. The current number of individuals in those households totals more than 800,000.

Food Stamp Program benefits are 100 percent federally funded through the United States Department of Agriculture. The program is administered by Human Services and provides nutritional assistance benefits to children and families, the elderly, the disabled, unemployed and working families.

The rise in Food Stamp Program participation over the last year can be attributed to seasonal factors and continued weak job growth. Outreach and education efforts on the part of the Department of Human Services and its partners have made many potentially eligible people aware of the program, as well.

Davidson County saw an increase in Food Stamp participation by 15 percent from May 2003 to May 2004 (30,000 to 34,500 households). Rutherford County numbers jumped 13 percent (5,700 to 6,400 households). Shelby County has the highest number of Food Stamp participants in the state and saw an increase in participation by 12 percent over the last year (60,300 to 67,300 households).

More than \$60 million in Food Stamp benefits are issued in Tennessee each month. Last month \$67 million in Food Stamp benefits were issued, compared with \$61.5 million in May 2003. For the last state fiscal year, the average household size was 2.3 persons, and the average household monthly benefit was \$172.

For more information on the Food Stamp program and to view a county by county breakdown of Food Stamp participation and issuance, visit the Department of Human Services website at:

<http://www.state.tn.us/humanserv/fs-participation.htm>

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